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LEARNED ANTIQUITY

*Scholarship and Society in the Near-East, the
Greco-Roman world,
and the Early Medieval West*

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BRIDGING THE GULF BETWEEN TRANSCENDENCE AND
IMMANENCE IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta

διὸ καὶ ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος νοῦς
Arist., *EN* 1143b

According to a surprising statement by E. Zeller in his monumental *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, the interpretation of Alexander of Aphrodisias would be responsible for the elimination of the 'mystical element' from Aristotle's philosophical system.¹ A century later, however, the opposite opinion would be held with equal conviction by G. Reale: Alexander would be responsible for the introduction into Aristotelianism of alien mystical tendencies, falsifying in this way the scientific and empiricist spirit of Aristotelian philosophy.² It is precisely the alleged falsification, of which both opinions accuse Alexander, that would explain the exhaustion and final disappearance of Aristotelianism in late Antiquity. Since no relevant new textual discoveries have been made in the last century to explain such contradictory statements, the alleged forgery seems rather to be a scape-goat for the frustrated expectations of interpreters in reconstructing their own pre-conceived Aristotle.

The purpose of the present contribution, however, is not to claim an empiricist or mystic construction of Aristotle.³ Rather I shall explore the general tendency in Late Antiquity (Alexander included) to approach Aristotle's writings mystically. With this purpose I review certain Aristotelian issues that recurrently appear in writers of Late Antiquity. This survey shows that whether or not this was the original intention of those issues, they appear wholly integrated in the philosophical thought of the period in order to serve its marked religious tendencies. I firstly focus on Alexander's interpretation of Aristotle's noetics and his development of the so-called 'rationalistic mysticism'. This mysticism of reason, as defined by Philip

¹ Zeller, *Die Philosophie*, p. 793. Cf. Merlan, *Monopsychism*, p. 34.

² Reale, *A History*, p. 33.

³ For the issue, see Merlan, *Monopsychism*, pp. 30-33 and note 2. For the influence of the Jaegerian evolutionist theory on the interpretation of Aristotelian thought and for new insights on the issue, see Bos, *Cosmic and Meta-Cosmic Theology*, pp. 97-112.

Merlan, describes, on the one hand, the 'theory teaching that the highest moments of man's existence are those of his absorption into whatever he takes the divine to be'. On the other, it 'designates a condition of man's mind which could be called supremely rational rather than irrational'.⁴ Secondly, a brief survey of other writers of the period exemplifies the recurrent appearance of Aristotelian elements especially in those contexts that state man's transcendent origin and claim that the reunion with the divinity is the main goal of his life. Finally, I consider possible Peripatetic echoes in the *Acts of Andrew*, an early Christian text that conceives the return to God as a deconstruction of the cognitive process. This deconstruction or reversal has the intention of regaining an original intuitive apprehension concomitant with the reunion of subject and object in the act of knowing.

Alexander

Alexander's differentiation between three sorts of νοῖ or 'intellects', namely the 'material intellect' (ὕλικος νοῦς),⁵ the 'acquired intellect' (ἐπίκτητος) or intellect *in habitu* (ἐν ἔξει),⁶ and the 'productive intellect' or νοῦς ποιητικός⁷ basically relies on an interpretation of *de Anima* III.5. Aristotle indeed distinguishes in this *passus* the passive intellect (νοῦς παθητικός), which becomes all things by being acted upon, from the active intellect that makes all things (ὁ νοῦς τῷ πάντα ποιεῖν).⁸ However, whereas Aristotle restricts himself to applying the notions of potentiality and actuality to the human soul,⁹ Alexander applies them to the νοῦς and introduces a divine productive intellect (νοῦς ποιητικός),¹⁰ which coming into man from without is the cause (αἷτιος) of the other two turning into actuality. Nevertheless, in doing so Alexander relies exclusively on Aristotle. Firstly, he divides Aristotle's passive intellect into two, namely the material intellect and the acquired intellect, on the basis of the opposition of potentiality and actuality. Whereas the former might be compared with the 'unwrittenness' of a blackboard because of its receptiveness,¹¹ the latter,

⁴ Merlan, *Monopsychism*, pp. 1-2; 20-21. Since Merlan's interpretative breakthrough, his position has originated certain opposition. For a state of the subject see Sharpless, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias', pp. 1224-1225.

⁵ Alex. Aphr., *de Anima* 81.9-28.

⁶ Alex. Aphr., *de Anima* 82.1-6.

⁷ Alex. Aphr., *de Anima* 88.23-89.12.

⁸ Aristotle, *de An.* 430a 10-19.

⁹ Aristotle, *de An.* 430a 13-14; Cf. Donini, *Tre studi*, p. 38ff.

¹⁰ See *infra*, note 45.

¹¹ Alex. Aphr., *de Anima* 84.24-26: 'Unwrittenness' (*tabulae rasum*), transl. Merlan (*Monopsychism*, p. 14).

once it has been instructed, is the form and perfection of the former.¹² Secondly, Alexander draws on Aristotle's differentiation between two sorts of actuality in *de Anima* II.1, which in the case of knowledge can be compared with the possession of knowledge and the active exercise thereof.¹³ Only the active exercise can be considered as intellect κατ' ἐνέργειαν. Having done so, he identifies the active intellect of *de Anima* III.5, which is 'transcendent', 'changeless' and 'pure', with the intelligence of the *Metaphysics* Λ.¹⁴ Finally, relying on the doctrine of the adventitious intellect of *de Generatione Animalium* (736b, 27ff.) he states that it comes into us from without. This adventitious intelligence is intelligible in the highest degree (κυρίως νοητόν), it is pure actuality, and the cause of other intelligibles.¹⁵ Therefore it may be called 'productive'. It is true that in demonstrating his point Alexander contaminates the simile of the light of *de Anima* III.5, in which light is a condition for the visibility of colours, with that of the sun in the *Republic* (507e-509b), in which the visible par excellence provides visibility to other visible objects.¹⁶ However, the productive aspect of the supreme intellect is not necessarily related to the idea of participation.¹⁷ Since the productive intellect is intelligible in the full sense of the word, it is the cause of the actualisation of the material intellect insofar as it provides it with pure intelligibles in order for it to develop its highest activity.¹⁸

Alexander's differentiation between material and immaterial intellect correlates with his distinction between forms in matter (ἐνυλα εἶδη) and forms without matter (ἄνυλα εἶδη). Whereas the material intellect can only perceive intelligibles in the presence of sensibles, the intellect *in habitu* when fully actualised can perceive them without the aid of sensorial perception.¹⁹ The productive intelligence in turn only thinks immaterial intelligibles.

Of prime importance for the transformation of human into divine intelligence is Alexander's restatement of the Aristotelian theory concerning the identity of subject and object in the intellect's act of knowing things without

¹² Alex. Aphr., *de Anima* 85.11.

¹³ Alex. Aphr., *de Anima* 85.25-86.5. See also 9.20ff.; 33.3ff.; 107.21ff. Cf. Arist., *de An.* 412a 9-11; 22-27 and *EN* 1157b 5ff.

¹⁴ *De anima* 89.9-19.

¹⁵ Alexander, *de Anima* 90.19ff.

¹⁶ This is obvious in his statement that the supreme and highest good is the cause of goodness in other things (*De anima* 89.2-4).

¹⁷ So Moraux, *Alexandre d'Aphrodise*, p. 39f.; Merlan, *Monopsychism*, p. 39; Donini, *Tre Studi*, p. 45, note 107; Fotinis, *The De Anima*, pp. 326-328.

¹⁸ Lloyd, 'The Principle', p. 150; Schroeder, 'The Analogy', pp. 215-225.

¹⁹ Alex. Aphr., *de Anima* 85.20-26.

matter.²⁰ Before this act, the knowing faculty and the thing known stand apart and are opposed as members of a relationship. When they are actualised their opposition disappears and they become a single reality.²¹ When the intellect thinks the intelligibles it becomes itself an intelligible.²² Consequently, when our intellect thinks the productive intelligence, it becomes in some way (πῶς γίνεται) this supreme intellect, and this is possible since in the act of thinking our intellect is assimilated (ὁμοιωθῆναι)²³ to the thing thought when apprehending its form. It follows that if one desires to have something divine within himself, he must engage in thinking something of this order.²⁴

The goal of man's life seems to consist in rising from the lowest levels of materiality to the highest of intelligibility. The culmination of this process, which is basically rational and strictly related to cognition, brings about the reunion with the productive intellect by means of the fusion of subject and object in the act of knowing.

Other authors

It is very plausible that the notion of the adventitious intellect would already have been discussed at the end of the first century BC.²⁵ Given the fact that Philo, in the first century AD, mentions it a couple of times,²⁶ it is not surprising to find it combined with *de Anima* III. 4-5 in his philosophical allegory concerning the celestial and terrestrial man. After explaining how the mortal *nous* is mixed with the body, Philo explicitly states that the mind of man is capable of turning to and knowing God only thanks to the *pneuma* inbreathed by God himself.²⁷ Just as in Alexander, by being extrinsically

²⁰ Aristotle, *de An.* 430a 2-4; 431a 1-3; *Metaph.* 1072b 20-22; 1074b 38-1075a 5.

²¹ Alex. Aphr., *de Anima* 86.23-28; see note 20 and further Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.9.5.30-31.

²² Alex. Aphr., *de Anima* 86.14-23.

²³ Merlan (*Monopsychism*, p. 16) sees in the use of the term ὁμοιοῦσθαι (90.17) an indication for a possible Peripatetic version of the Platonic ὁμοίωσις θεῷ. Against this, cf. Donini, *Tre studi*, p. 36ff.

²⁴ Alex. Aphr., *de Anima* 91.5-6. Cf. Aristotle, *EN* 1177b 31-34. According to Donini (*Tre studi*, p. 36ff.), the religious tone in the former passage would be less important than in the latter. However, cf. Sharpless, 'Alexander', p. 1225, note 236.

²⁵ Aetius IV.5.11, 392b 3 Diels.

²⁶ *Opif.* 67 and *De Somniis* 30-32.

²⁷ *Leg. alleg.* 31-40; 88-90. See also *Plant.* 19; *Heres.* 64. See Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus*, pp. 408-409.

acted upon the material and perishable *nous* becomes immortal and divine *nous*.²⁸

Alcinous is a clear example of the integration of Aristotelian noetics and psychology. He distinguishes both between embodied and disembodied intelligibles and between divine and human thought. Whereas God thinks νοητά or 'intelligibles' in their purity, i.e. Platonic ideas, man thinks exclusively forms-in-matter, in the Aristotelian sense, since his thinking is mixed with sensorial perception. As has been pointed out,²⁹ this idea may arise from Aristotle's assertion that man cannot think without images.³⁰ There is, however, a more proper precedent for this idea. It is Aristotle's statement that *intelligibilia*, though more knowable by nature (γνωριμώτερα τῇ φύσει), are less knowable than the particulars due to sensorial perception.³¹

Aristotelian elements also pervade Alcinous's exposition of the gradation soul – intellect in potentiality, intellect in actuality – first principle.³² Potentiality and actuality of the intellect,³³ movement of the cosmic intellect due to the attraction to the object of desire,³⁴ God conceived of as 'unmoved mover' and intellect, and the identity of this highest intellect with *intelligibilia*³⁵ are clearly Aristotelian. For our present purpose, however, it is especially interesting to focus on the double causality of God,³⁶ namely final and

²⁸ For the influence of the Aristotelian 'unmoved mover' on Philo, see Boyancé, 'Le Dieu très haut'. For the idea of the reunion of subject and object in the act of knowing, see Wolfson, *Philo*, p. 229ff. and p. 249ff.

²⁹ Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus*, pp. 459-460.

³⁰ See *de An.* 431a 16-17; *Mem.* 449b 30-450a 14.

³¹ See *Metaph.* 1029b. 3ff and *APo.* 71b. 33-72a 6; *Ph.* 184a. 15ff. Cf. also Max. Tyr. 11.7 (ed. Trapp). See Festugière, *La Révélation*, p. 111.

³² *Didasc.* 164.18-20. It is true that in dividing the Intellect into two, namely first principle and celestial intellect, he is combining Aristotle's divinity with the Platonic good, but it is remarkable that this first principle is nevertheless described as an 'unmoved mover'. As Moraux (*Der Aristotelismus*, p. 467) suggests, this differentiation between a highest intellect and celestial intellect might proceed from combining the God from the *Metaphysics* Λ and the tendency to consider the celestial bodies endowed with a soul. It is indeed plausible that the idea of a celestial intellect proceeds from Peripatetic discussions concerning the movement of the celestial bodies, since Simplicius (*in Coel.* 379.32ff.) preserves a passage of Alexander's commentary on *Coel.* (ad II 1) in which the latter comments on contradictions between Aristotle's *Coel.* I 1-2 and II 2; 12ff. In this context, he refers to Herminus's opinion, according to which the celestial bodies could have an eternal movement thanks to their being endowed with a soul. Cf. Aristotle, *Coel.* 285a 29; 295a 18ff; Theophr. *Metaph.* 8.5b.2; Aetius I.7.32.

³³ *Didasc.* 164.18-20. Cf. *de An.* III. 5.

³⁴ *Didasc.* 164.16; 20-24. Cf. *Metaph.* 1072a 23-30.

³⁵ *Didasc.* 163.30-31. Cf. *Metaph.* 1072b 18-26; 1074b 17-35.

³⁶ Or 'supreme intelligence'. For Alcinous's hesitation concerning the first principle

efficient,³⁷ in turning the cosmic soul to himself. On the one hand, he moves the cosmic intellect attracting him as ὁρεκτόν.³⁸ On the other, he 'orders' (κοσμέω) the cosmic soul so that it might be attracted to the νοητά. According to Alcinous this 'ordering' should not be understood as 'creation' in time.³⁹ Rather, this action of the first God awakens the cosmic soul from a deep sleep⁴⁰ in order for it to be able to turn (ἐπιστρέφω) to him.⁴¹ By thinking the thoughts of God,⁴² the cosmic soul becomes a νοῦς κατ' ἐνέργειαν, that is the cosmic nous.⁴³

Although Alcinous applies it not to the human but to the cosmic soul, this latter sort of causality presents obvious similarities with Alexander's. In addition, we see once again,⁴⁴ that in the process of actualisation of the nous there appears a contamination of *de Anima* III.4-5 and *de Anima* II.1. From the former he takes the notions of potentiality and actuality of the nous and the definition of the 'intellect in act' as ὁ νοῦς τῷ πάντα ποιεῖν.⁴⁵ From the latter he takes the differentiation of two sorts of actuality: whereas the active exercise of knowledge (θεωρεῖν) is compared to awakening, the mere

(*Didasc.* 164.23: God; 164.26: intellect; 164.27: intellect; 164.31: God) see Merlan, *Monopsychism*, pp. 63-67.

³⁷ See Loenen, 'Albinus' *Metaphysics* (I), p. 302ff. As Moraux (*Der Aristotelismus*, p. 464) points out, although from an Aristotelian point of view, God's causality is that of a mover, Alcinous's main interest is not as much the cause of motion as the relationship of this world to the world of the ideas.

³⁸ *Didasc.* 164.24ff.

³⁹ *Didasc.* 169.31ff.

⁴⁰ Witt (*Albinus*, pp. 131-132) thinks the origin of the motif is unknown. However, by comparing it with Plutarch (*De anima. Procr.* 1026 F) and with Maximus of Tyre (10.1-3 Trapp), he concludes that it must have been a current notion in Middle-Platonic discussions on the soul. According to Loenen ('Albinus' *Metaphysics* II', p. 51), Alcinous is reworking a Plutarchean image. Trapp (*Maximus of Tyre*, p. 87) relates it to the Platonic passage *Meno* 85c. Cf. Philo, *De Somniis*. 165. See, however, *infra*, notes 46 and 50.

⁴¹ *Didasc.* 165.1-4; 169.30-35.

⁴² The Aristotelian definition of the 'unmoved mover' as νόησις νοήσεως in *Metaph.* Λ 6-9 and the doctrine of the identity of intelligibles and intelligence (*de An.* 430a 3-4; 19-22; 431a 1-4; *Metaph.* 1072b 18-22; 1074b 17-1075a 5) provides a suitable conceptual frame for the fusion of Platonic and Aristotelian thought in the doctrine that the ideas are thoughts of God. See Jones, 'The Ideas', p. 323; Rich, 'The Platonic Ideas'.

⁴³ *Didasc.* 164.27-31.

⁴⁴ See *supra*, note 15.

⁴⁵ According to Merlan (*Monopsychism*, p. 10) it is precisely the use of the verb ποιεῖν the link permitting Plotinus the identification of the Platonic demiurge (*Tim.* 28C, ποιητής τοῦ παντός) with the Aristotelian Intelligence.

possession of knowledge is equalled to sleep.⁴⁶ This double actuality provides Alcinous with a proper frame with which to sustain his allegorical interpretation of the *Timaeus*. Plato did not mean to say that the world was created in time, since it has always existed. Since a transition from a sleeping to a waking state does not involve qualitative change,⁴⁷ he avoids the contradiction of saying that the cosmic nous was in a potential state, while little before he described it as being in actuality (ὁ κατ' ἐνέργειαν πάντα νοῦν καὶ ἅμα καὶ αἰεῖ).⁴⁸ It must be noted that Alcinous describes the result of the awakening with the verb ἀποβλέπω 'to look at, contemplate',⁴⁹ which might echo the θεωρεῖν of the Aristotelian passage.⁵⁰ Only after being awakened can the cosmic soul contemplate the νοητά and be attracted to them.

A similar conception appears in Maximus of Tyre,⁵¹ but now applied to the individual's intellect. He distinguishes human intellect, which also appears in its double aspect of potentiality and actuality, from divine intellect, which is defined as 'the intellect which thinks always all things at the same time'.⁵² How does man come to know this intellect? Of importance is his

⁴⁶ Although sleeping and waking are compared in the *Metaphysics* (1048a 30-1048b2) with potentiality and actuality, respectively, the simile is applied in *de An.* 412a 9-11; 22-26 to the differentiation between two sorts of ἐντελέχεια, namely the possession of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) from the active exercise thereof (θεωρεῖν). Similarly, the simile of sleeping/waking distinguishes in *EN* 1157b 5-11 the disposition (ἔξις) to be virtuous from the active exercise of virtue. The virtue of a sleeping virtuous man is indeed a ἔξις by the fact that he is not exercising it (*EN* 1095b 30ff). Cf., however, *MM* 1201b 15ff; D. L. 5.34.

⁴⁷ See Aristotle, *de An.* 417a 30-417b 2.

⁴⁸ See in addition Aristotle's statement (*de An.* 431a 1-6) that potentiality is prior in time to actuality only in the particular cases but not in the universal.

⁴⁹ *Didasc.* 169.40.

⁵⁰ Deuse (*Untersuchungen*, pp. 83-85) agrees with Mansfeld ('Three notes', p. 65), in seeing here the influence of Aristotle's definition of sleep as 'inactivity of the soul' (*EE* 1219b 19ff.). However, in his view, the motif originates in Aristotle's differentiation between two kinds of potentiality in *de An.* 417b 29ff. (cf. *GA* 735a 9-11). The context of Alcinous's statement, however, seems rather to point to *de An.* II.1 (412a 9-11; 22-27), where sleeping and waking are considered as first and second actualities (see *supra*, note 45). In addition, the passage of Porphyrius (*ad Gaurum*, p. 33.14-23) quoted by Deuse (*Untersuchungen*, pp. 84-85) seems also to point in this direction (see especially 38.22-23). Also Dillon (*Alcinous*, p. 164), though hesitatingly, refers to *de An.* II.1, since in his view the use of ἔξις and ἐνέργεια would come into the Peripatetic and Platonic tradition later. See, however, *EN* 1157b 5-11.

⁵¹ All references follow Trapp, *Maximus Tyrius*; English translations by Trapp (*Maximus of Tyre*).

⁵² *Diss.* 11.8, 187-191.

differentiation between 'intelligibles' and 'perceptibles'. Where-as the former, though more knowable by nature, are less knowable due to sensation, the latter are more familiar to us through daily experience.⁵³ Since God is an intelligible,⁵⁴ it is obvious that no sense perception can grasp him. According to the principle of 'like knows like' it is the 'noblest and purest and most intelligent' aspect of his soul that can grasp him at once in one single act of comprehension. In this intuitive and single act of apprehension the intellect 'sees' and 'hears' the intelligible.⁵⁵ In describing the method to achieve this intuitive apprehension, namely the ἐπιστροφή, *Oration* 11 combines this 'inward turn' with the topos of the flight of the mind and follows, consequently, the Platonic *Phaedrus* (246d-247e). However, Maximus applies it to describe the way in which the νοῦς, finally freed from sensation, achieves ultimate knowledge.⁵⁶ In addition, his treatment of the issue in *Oration* 10 presents interesting parallels with the above-mentioned conception of Alcinous. In order to answer the question of whether this 'turning to oneself' must be called 'learning' or 'recollection' he states the following, 'Reason (λόγος) ... does not bring or implant understanding (ἐπιστήμη), like something the soul did not already possess; instead, it reawakens the understanding it does possess, but which is dim, and constrained and torpid'.⁵⁷ Knowledge is the 'awakening' and the 'organisation' of true opinions.⁵⁸ We find then once again the idea of the double actuality and, together with it, the notions of awakening and ordering. Whereas 'forgetfulness' is comparable to sleep, the process of rousing provoked by reason is 'recollection' and the preservation of what has been set in order is 'memory'.⁵⁹

The Acts of Andrew

In the *Acts of Andrew*⁶⁰ (= *AA*) the notions of the awakening of human intellect and the active exercise of knowledge are also preconditions for the possibility of returning to God (ἐπιστρέφω). Until God's intervention the

σφζόμενον γένος or 'saved race' remains ignorant of its true condition and is apparently subject to time and movement and the concomitant processes of coming-to-be and passing away. By recognising his people, however, God confers upon them a *new* existential status.⁶¹ Awakened from the slumber of oblivion (λήθη),⁶² their disposition to know allows them first to acknowledge their true belonging and to reach dialectically —namely, by the *via eminentiae*— knowledge of God's existence.⁶³ Even if just preparatory, this preliminary knowledge is essential, since the awareness of their transcendent origin also provides them with the goal (τέλος) of their being. As they possess now something to turn themselves to, they can engage in the process of self-knowledge that, by means of introversion, will allow them to come to know God essentially.

The lower stages of this process of self-knowledge are placed within the frame of the known Aristotelian triad for acquiring moral virtue,⁶⁴ namely φύσις, ἔθος-ἄσκησις, and μάθησις, that frequently appears in philosophical writers of the period.⁶⁵ Similarly as in Aristotle, these three successive steps strictly correspond with the domain of practical life and φρόνησις as opposed to theoretical life. Although the former is clearly inferior to the latter, man's actual 'unfree' state makes practical life a necessary pre-condition for contemplation.⁶⁶ This is the reason why the return to God is conceived as a deconstructive process. Before human intellect can achieve an intuitive apprehension of the divinity, it must be released from

⁶¹ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 38.5-10: Μακάριον ἡμῶν τὸ γένος, ὑπὸ τίνος ἡγάπηται; μακαρία ἡμῶν ἢ ὑπαρξίς, ὑπὸ τίνος ἡλέηται; οὐκ ἐσμέν τινες χαμαιριφρεῖς, ὑπὸ τοιούτου ὕψους γνωρισθέντες· οὐκ ἐσμέν χρόνου, εἴτα ὑπὸ χρόνου λυόμενοι· οὐκ ἐσμέν κινήσεως τέχνη, πάλιν ὑφ' ἑαυτῆς ἀφανιζομένη, οὐδὲ γενέσεως αἰτία, εἰς αὐτὸ τελευτῶντες.

⁶² See *Phaedr.* 248C; 250A, but also *C.H.* X 15; *TripTrac* 77.22-25; *EvVer.* 17.10ff.

⁶³ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 38.11-18: ἐσμέν τοῦ κρείττονος· διὰ τοῦτο ἀπὸ τοῦ χειρόνος φεύγομεν. ἐσμέν τοῦ καλοῦ, δι' ὃν τὸ αἰσχρὸν ἀπαθούμεθα (-μεθα prop. Bonnet)· τοῦ δικαίου, δι' οὗ τὸ ἄδικον ῥίπτομεν· τοῦ ἐλεήμονος, δι' οὗ τὸν ἀνελεήμονα ἀφίεμεν· τοῦ σφζοντος, δι' οὗ τὸν ἀπολλύντα ἐγνωρίσαμεν· τοῦ φωτός, δι' οὗ τὸ σκότος ἐρρίψαμεν· τοῦ ἐνός, δι' οὗ τὰ πολλὰ ἀπεστράμμεθα· τοῦ ὑπερουρανίου, δι' οὗ τὰ ἐπίγεια ἐμάθομεν· τοῦ μένοντος, δι' οὗ τὰ μένοντα εἶδομεν.

⁶⁴ See *EN* 1179b 20ff; *EE* 1214a 16ff.

⁶⁵ See [Plutarch], *De lib. ed.* 2a; Alcin., *Didasc.* 181.19-182.13; D.L. 5.18; Archytas, *De ed.* 3, p. 41.20ff. Thesleff; Philo, *Vita Abrah.* 52-4; Maximus of Tyre 1.5; 12.9; 27.9. Arius Didymus (*ap.* Stob. *Anth.* 2.118.5ff) offers perhaps the best parallel for *AA*, since his triad is φύσις, ἔθος and λόγος.

⁶⁶ See also Alcinous, *Didasc.* 153.3-23 and Aspasius, in *EN comm.* I, 2-2, 13. Cf. Aristotle. *EN* 1177b 7ff. See Bos, *Cosmic and Meta-Cosmic Theology*, pp. 151-152.

⁵³ *Diss.* 11.7, 132-134. *Supra*, note 31.

⁵⁴ For the slide from God as supreme intelligible (νοητόν) to God as supreme intelligence (νοῦς), see Festugière, *La Révélation*, pp. 112-113; 127; 136 and Trapp, *Maximus of Tyre*, p. 103, note 32. See also *supra*, note 42.

⁵⁵ *Diss.* 11.9, 204-213.

⁵⁶ See [Aristotle], *Mu.* 391b 8-11; Philo *Opif.* 69-71.

⁵⁷ *Diss.* 10.3, 73-6. See *supra*, notes 40, 46, and 50.

⁵⁸ *Diss.* 10.6, 142-3. Cf. Aristotle, *APo.* 100a 3-100b5.

⁵⁹ *Diss.* 10.6, 159-61.

⁶⁰ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', in *AAA* II/1, pp. 38-45. All English translations are my own.

the burdens that it acquired in its degradation from the highest to the lowest regions of the cosmos.

As for the cause that originates this process of degradation, *AA* is not explicit.⁶⁷ The first time we encounter the νοῦς in the key passage of the Paradise scene,⁶⁸ it has been already degraded to the level of ψυχή or 'soul', since it is said to be subject to affections, namely to 'suffering' (πάσχω).⁶⁹ However, the reason explaining its suffering describes the νοῦς as being 'split up and alienated from itself' (καταχθείς καὶ ἀπολισθίσας ἑαυτοῦ).⁷⁰ This may give us a hint as to the cause of its degradation, since it actually depicts the loss of the intrinsic characteristics of the νοῦς, namely its unity and self-centred activity.⁷¹ It is thus plausible to think that what originates the degradation of the νοῦς is the incorrect direction of its intellective activity. An interruption (due to necessity related to creation?) in the intellect's incessant activity of thinking the intelligibles, namely God, might originate a first discrepancy between subject and object in the act of knowing. This possibility is coherent with the reasons given for the degradation of Eve and Adam, namely ignorance and error. The deficiency of the νοῦς and its subsequent intermittent thinking combined with Eve's and Adam's unawareness of this deficiency, might have led them to try to supersede their ignorance by their own means.⁷²

This interruption in the intellect's incessant activity originates three causally related steps in a gradual withdrawal of the 'intellect' from its original, complete and unitary knowledge. The first one is indeed the transition from intuitive to discursive apprehension due to the discrepancy between subject and object (and this also implies the appearance of number).⁷³

⁶⁷ In spite of Erbetta (*Gli Apocrifi*, p. 400, note 1) Eve and Adam's fall in *AA* is normally interpreted as due to sexuality. See Hennecke, *Handbuch*, p. 552; Wagener, 'Repentant Eve, Perfected Adam', pp. 350-351; Cirillo, 'L'Uomo interiore', p. 15, and most recently Bovon, 'The Words', p. 84. For an important interpretative breakthrough, see Luttikhuisen, 'The Religious Message', pp. 99-100.

⁶⁸ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 40.12-22.

⁶⁹ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 40.15-17: καὶ ὅπερ ὁ σὺν ἐκείνῃ καταχθείς καὶ ἀπολισθίσας ἑαυτοῦ νοῦς ἔπαθεν, ἐγὼ σὺν σοί, τῇ γνωρίζουσῃ ἑαυτὴν ἀναγομένην, διορθοῦμαι.

⁷⁰ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 40.15-16. The first of the participles is normally considered to belong to the verb κατάγω '(metaph.) bring down'. I understand it as an aor. participle from κατάγνυμι 'break in pieces, shatter'.

⁷¹ *Metaph.* 1072b 20-1073a 14; *de An.* 430a 22; *Plot. Enn.* 5.9.5.

⁷² This does not imply, as in *TripTrac.* 78.17, 'arrogance' (*tsise* or τόλμα, cf. *Plot. Enn.* 5.5.1), since *AA* explicitly relates the 'suffering' with ignorance (Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 40.13-15).

⁷³ For the νοῦς as ἐν πολλά see Dörrie, 'Zum Ursprung', p. 286.

And as soon as the act of knowing does not revert upon itself there appears ignorance. It is this very ignorance that responds for the second stage of degradation from νοῦς to soul or ψυχή, since it originates the appearance of doubt and fear, namely affections.⁷⁴ Desire to achieve knowledge in order to overcome ignorance impels the soul to undertake the cognitive process. Paradoxically, however, this search for knowledge will only enhance its disgrace. Since λόγος or 'discursive knowledge' is intrinsically related to reason and speech, its application to gain knowledge will give up soul and intellect to the slumber of appearance and persuasion.⁷⁵ As was to be expected, the original ignorance remains unaltered and characterises each of these stages of degradation.

This interpretation is further supported by Andrew's assertion that, differently from Eve and Adam, Maximilla and he himself are now aware of the first couple's deficiency. It is precisely this awareness of that which was defective in Eve (τὸ ἐκείνης ἐνδεές) and that which was imperfect in Adam (τὸ ἐκείνου ἀτελές) that allows Maximilla and Andrew to correct their error. Their being conscious of their true nature and origin enables them to acknowledge their deficient condition. This awareness is essential inasmuch as it generates the will⁷⁶ that will allow the ἐπιστροφή or 'return to God', since they now distinctly perceive themselves as the effect of a cause and they subsequently recognise their potential identity with it.⁷⁷

If my interpretation of the passage is correct, Aristotelian echoes are evident not only in the conception of the νοῦς as thinking itself always and incessantly, but also in the notion that what is potential, incomplete and deficient tends to its perfection and actuality. The Aristotelian assertion that actuality is prior to potentiality⁷⁸ plays here, as it also does in Neoplatonism⁷⁹ and Gnosticism⁸⁰, an important role, since it is the full actuality or perfection of the cause which assures the eventual perfection of the effect.

⁷⁴ For a similar process in the origin of affections see *EvVer.* 17.10-15.

⁷⁵ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae' 44.10-14: ὁρᾶτε γὰρ μηδὲν (Bonnet: prop. for μηδένα) ὡμὼν ιστάμενον, ἀλλὰ τὰ πάντα εὐμετάβολα μέχρι ἡθῶν ἀνθρωπίνων· τοῦτο δὲ συμβαίνει διὰ τὴν ἀπαίδευτον ψυχὴν τὴν εἰς φύσιν πλανηθεῖσαν καὶ κατὰ (τὰ) (*scripsi*) τῆς πλάνης ἐνέχυρα κατέχουσιν.

⁷⁶ *Plot. Enn.* 6.1.21.

⁷⁷ Actuality is their ἀρχή and their τέλος. See Proclus, *Inst.* 31, and Dodds, *Proclus (ad loc.)*.

⁷⁸ See *de An.* 430a 20-22; *Metaph.* 1050a 7ff.; 1077a 18ff.

⁷⁹ *Plot. Enn.* 6.9.9. Cf. Proclus in *Parm.* 922.3ff.

⁸⁰ *EvVer.* 19.3-7. Attridge and MacRae (*Nag hammadi Codex I*, p. 53) provide several parallels, but none presents so explicit a treatment of the issue. *TripTrac.* 78.1-17 (cf. 123.32-33) presents certain similarities, although it relates 'imperfection' with 'arrogance', since according to this text the effect seems to

However, before reaching this level the followers must engage, under Andrew's supervision, in a laborious and complete deconstruction of their current being. In order to reverse the effects of the cognitive (discursive) process, the knowledge transmitted by Andrew must awaken soul and intellect from their present dormant state and organise the disorder arising from material life. Andrew explicitly states that his goal is 'to remind' (ὑπομνήσκω)⁸¹ and we have seen that Maximus of Tyre compares 'forgetfulness' with sleep.⁸² This awakening is *sensu stricto* possible since the intellect is extrinsically acted upon. 'To be recognised' (γνωρίζομαι) by the One assures, by the principle of 'like knows like', the possibility of knowing him (γνωρίζω).⁸³ The following rational process of deconstruction, which somewhat resembles the *via eminentiae*, intends to neutralise the fore-mentioned three successive steps that have led the intellect to its state of apathy. These reverted steps are represented by Andrew's speeches to the brethren, Stratocles and Maximilla⁸⁴ and all of them present clear Aristotelian traits. The first one (φύσις) consists in reorganising the realm of perception and being able to distinguish false from true appearances. The second one (ἔθος) consists in reinforcing the rational part of the soul that may subdue excessive affections by means of rational control and μετριοπάθεια.⁸⁵ The ultimate instruction, or third step, aims to supersede both speech and the discursive character of λόγος. Andrew's words of praise remark the success of the deconstructive stages:⁸⁶

Well done you, saved nature, since you were not strong and you did not keep yourself hidden!⁸⁷ Well done you, soul, shouting which you suffered and re-

preserve the perfection of its cause. Cf. *TripTrac*. 69.1-4 and Thomassen, *Le Traité*, p. 344. Differently, *EvVer*. 19.3-7 states that the father 'retains within himself their perfection, granting it to them as a return to him and a perfectly unitary knowledge'. The awareness of their deficiency proceeds from self-knowledge (See *EvVer*. 21.3-25, esp. 14-18; cf. Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae' 40.17-19). Cf. Ménard, *L'Évangile*, p. 91.

⁸¹ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 44.4-8: 'Εγὼ ἀδελφοὶ ἐξεπέμφθην ὑπὸ τοῦ κυρίου ἀπόστολος εἰς τὰ κλίματα ταῦτα ὧν με κατηξίωσεν ὁ κύριός μου, διδάξαι μὲν οὐδένα, ὑπομνήσαι δὲ πάντα τὸν συγγενὴ τῶν λόγων ἄνθρωπον, ὅτι ἐν κακοῖς τοῖς προσκαιροῖς διάγουσι, τερπόμενοι ταῖς ἐπιβλαβέσιν αὐτῶν φαντασίαις.'

⁸² Once he does so he advises his followers to stay awake (Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae' 45. 28: διυπνίζω). Cf. Aristotle, *de An.* 429a 5ff.

⁸³ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 38.1-20.

⁸⁴ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 44.4-45.33; 42.7-43.18; 39.27-42.6, respectively.

⁸⁵ Since τὸ πᾶν ἦθος διὰ ἔθος (Plat. *Legg.* 792e), see Aristotle, *EE* 1220a 39.

⁸⁶ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 40.24-27.

⁸⁷ My translation of Schimmelpfennig's reading (in: Hennecke, *Handbuch*, pp.

turning to yourself! Well done Anthropos, who understands what is not yours and hastens towards what is yours!

Once so far, practical wisdom or φρόνησις can be left behind in order to achieve a higher degree of intuitive apprehension. It is at this point that the listener, namely the intellect, thinks much worthier things than what has been said.⁸⁸ By becoming aware of being 'immaterial, saint, light, akin to the not-generated, transparent, intelligible, celestial, and pure',⁸⁹ he perceives and apprehends himself in his real condition. He then sees his face in his own essence and tearing all his shackles he desires (ποθέω) to see the One whom he has not yet seen.⁹⁰ Thanks to God's activity as *causa efficiens* in providing the means for his people to turn to him, he attracts them now as *causa finalis*. In this reunion with God, which is equalled to the fusion of subject and object in the act of knowing, nothing obscure remains and by means of a sort of illumination man achieves complete knowledge.

One might rightly wonder whether this illumination resulting from intuitive apprehension may at all be compared with the τέλος of philosophy according to Aristotle. However, famous is the Aristotelian assertion that human nature is 'un-free', which is explicit in the *Metaphysics* and implicit in other places, such as the *Nicomachean Ethics* or the *Physics*.⁹¹ Aristotle's defence of the θεωρητικὸς βίος or 'contemplative life' as the most excellent for man is consistent with this view. Such a life would be his complete *eudaimonia*, since it is the activity in accordance with the highest virtue of his highest or most divine part, namely his intellect.⁹² However, as humans also depend on externalities and are ephemeral, man cannot achieve this absolutely by virtue of his human condition, but rather by virtue of participating in what is most divine in him. The corollary of the preceding statement is that mortals should try 'to achieve immortality as far as possible'.⁹³ True, the method to reach this goal remains obscure and perhaps the *Eudemian Ethics* advances a little by putting in the contemplation of God the object of this contemplative life.⁹⁴

552-553): μὴ ἰσχύσασα μὴδ' ἑαυτὴν ἀποκρύψασα.

⁸⁸ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 40.27-28, with Festugière's emendation (*La Révélation*, p. 229, note 3): νοούμενον ἢ (τὸ) λεγόμενον.

⁸⁹ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 40.32-3.

⁹⁰ Bonnet, 'Ex actis Andreae', 41.2-6.

⁹¹ In general, see *Metaph.* 982b 22-983a 5; for human need of external goods as a condition to contemplation, see *EN* 1178a 33-35; for man's dependence upon the environment, see *Ph.* 253a 12ff; 259b 11.

⁹² *EN* 1177a 12-13; 21-22.

⁹³ *EN* 1177b 34-35.

⁹⁴ *EE* 1249b 16ff.

One might, indeed, be tempted to relate these notions to the passage in *de Anima* that states that θεωρητικὴ ἐπιστήμη or 'speculative knowledge' is the same as its object. Since in the case of things without matter that which thinks and that which is thought are the same, there seems to be only one step to proposing that the final goal of the cognitive process and the reunion with God are identical. Since the goal of man is to live in accordance with his most divine part, and since this part is his intellect, understood not as potentiality but as an act, it would seem, indeed, that at those moments in which human intellect is actualised, man, by the act of thinking God, is assimilated to him. Such an act of intelligence might be seen as a return to a perfect and unitary knowledge that transcends, after the reunion of subject and object, the very discursive knowledge, by reaching a sort of supra-rational, intuitive apprehension.

As far we know, it is true, Aristotle did not explicitly make this step and the resulting ambiguity is what Zeller calls the 'mystische Unbestimmtheit' of his philosophy.⁹⁵ Significantly, however, the corpus repeatedly draws the distinction between intuition of the intellect and the discursive λόγος and describes the former with the words θιγεῖν, θιγγάνειν, θίξις 'to touch, contact, contacting'.⁹⁶ Two Aristotelian fragments advance in the definition of this contacting. The first one, *De philos.* 15R preserved by Michael Psellus,⁹⁷ after referring to the same distinction states that intuitive apprehension comes about by means of a sort of illumination of the *nous* (αὐτοῦ παθόντος τοῦ νοῦ τὴν ἑλλαμψιν). In the second one, *Eudemus* 10R preserved by Plutarch,⁹⁸ Aristotle is said to have conceived the culmination of philosophy as a sort of telestic illumination, by which the soul 'contacts' (θιγγάνειν) the first, pure and simple reality.⁹⁹

On the basis of the closing remarks to the *Posterior Analytics*, one may suggest that for Aristotle the cognitive process, although its lower stages seem to be empirical, culminates in a non-discursive act of intelligence.¹⁰⁰ Of course it might be objected that intuitive apprehension of the principles does not necessarily mean supra-rational apprehension. We seem then to face the same aporia that E. Zeller faced more than a hundred years ago

⁹⁵ Zeller, *Die Philosophie*, p. 793.

⁹⁶ As pointed out by Theiler ('Die Entdeckung', p. 105) and Merlan (*From Platonism to Neoplatonism*, p. 186, and *Monopsychism*, p. 3). See also Bos, *Cosmic and Meta-Cosmic Theology*, pp. 64-65. Cf. *Metaph.* 1051b 24; 1072b 19-21; *de An.* 427b 4. Furthermore Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.3.10.39.

⁹⁷ *Schol. ad Joh. Climacum* 6.171.

⁹⁸ Plutarch, *De Is. et Os.* 382d-e.

⁹⁹ See Boyancé, 'Sur les mystères d'Eleusis', p. 462; Croissant, *Aristote et les mystères*, pp. 145-146.

¹⁰⁰ *An. Post.* 100b 5ff.; *EN* 1140b 31-1141a 8.

when interpreting the term ἀρχαί. Either the principles are to be 'logical principles of reasoning', in which case we will have a rationalistic Aristotle, or they must be understood as 'principals', namely intelligibles, in which case our philosopher turns out to be supra-rationalistic.¹⁰¹

This survey of Aristotelian influences in different contexts of Late Antiquity shows that such an aporia did not exist for his ancient readers. As a point of fact the latter always take the Philosopher in the latter way. It is up to us to decide whether this interpretation is legitimate or not. In my view, however, this is perhaps less important and certainly less interesting than understanding how and why this *Aristoteles mysticus* develops in the period.

¹⁰¹ See Zeller, *Die Philosophie*, p. 196; Merlan, *Monopsychism*, p. 31.